



ST. LOUIS CONVENTION & VISITORS COMMISSION

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NEWS RELEASE

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Debate Adds to St. Louis' Long Political History

St. Louis - November 6, 2003 - The selection of Washington University in St. Louis as the site of a Presidential Debate in 2004, puts the community firmly in the national spotlight.

"The Debate gives us the chance to put our best effort forward in front of media from around the world and a huge national television audience," said St. Louis Convention & Visitors Commission President Carole Moody. "This is a wonderful opportunity for a national forum to illustrate how the business, academic and governmental communities of St. Louis can pull together to create the perfect location for an important event. It also helps us create a positive impression for St. Louis among people who influence popular opinion in this country."

The debate is expected to attract more than 1,500 members of the media to St. Louis along with the candidates' campaign staffs and supporters.

"How can you put a dollar amount on 90 minutes of prime-time exposure to an estimated 100 million viewers?" asked Moody. "This will certainly be one of the most important events St. Louis has ever been asked to host."

Washington University in St. Louis also played host to debates in the 1992 and 2000 presidential campaigns.

Long before formal debates, St. Louis enjoyed an interesting presidential past. The first national political convention held in St. Louis was the Democratic National Convention, which took place in 1876 at the old Merchant's Exchange Building. That year, New York Gov. Samuel J. Tilden won the party's nomination. The convention's all-male attendance status was shattered by the appearance of St. Louisan Phoebe Couzins, a graduate of the Washington University School of Law, who read a proclamation regarding women's suffrage from Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Coincidentally, the National Woman Suffrage Association had held its 1869 convention in St. Louis. Tilden was defeated in the general election by Republican candidate Rutherford B. Hayes.

In 1888, the Democrats again met in St. Louis. During that era, it was considered ill-mannered for an incumbent to campaign in person. The party's nominee, President Grover Cleveland, was a "no show" at the convention and at the polls as Cleveland lost the election to Republican Benjamin Harrison.

The GOP's presidential candidate selection process took place one time in St. Louis. The 1896 St. Louis Republican Convention named a Midwesterner, Ohio Congressman William McKinley, as the party's nominee. McKinley became the 25th president of the United States.

In 1904, the world and the Democrats came to St. Louis. The Democrats could not resist meeting in St. Louis during the famous Louisiana Purchase Exposition (better known today as the "Meet Me in St. Louis" World's Fair). The fair's success did not transfer to the party's candidate, New York jurist Alton B. Parker. Parker suffered an overwhelming defeat to popular incumbent President Theodore Roosevelt.

Determined to produce a winner from a St. Louis convention, Democrats gathered here in 1916 and finally enjoyed success as their candidate, Woodrow Wilson, won the White House.

Throughout St. Louis' history, the office of the president of the United States has impacted St. Louis and St. Louis has

influenced that office. Visitors to St. Louis can discover the community's presidential connections by touring several free, historic attractions. The following are some historical and fun facts about St. Louis' relationship with those who have held the nation's top job:

- **President Thomas Jefferson's** dream of a continental United States became closer to reality when he purchased the Louisiana Territory, which included St. Louis, from France for \$15 million in 1803. Today, Jefferson's vision is commemorated on St. Louis' Mississippi River bank with a gleaming, 630-foot stainless steel sculpture known as the **Gateway Arch**. The Arch, now the internationally recognized symbol of St. Louis, is part of the 97-acre Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, a national park dedicated to America's westward expansion and the movement that made St. Louis the Gateway to the West. More than 4 million annual visitors explore the Arch grounds which also include the **Museum of Westward Expansion** located beneath the sculpture, St. Louis' **Old Courthouse** and **Luther Ely Smith Square**.
- Another site open for visitors is **Jefferson Barracks**. Named to honor **President Thomas Jefferson**, the Federal Army post opened in 1826 as the nation's first "Infantry School of Practice" and played an important role in westward expansion. In addition to being named after the country's third president, two other presidents served the Army at "JB" - 12th president **Zachary Taylor** and 18th president **Ulysses S. Grant**. Grant wasn't the only Civil War general formerly stationed at Jefferson Barracks. Philip Sheridan and William T. Sherman, who later became a full-time St. Louis resident, also served here. Ironically, Confederate leaders Robert E. Lee and Confederate President Jefferson Davis were among the soldiers who had toiled at this Federal Army post built high on St. Louis' Mississippi river bluffs. Today, Jefferson Barracks houses a national cemetery and a military museum that is open free-of-charge.
- In 1843, young Second Lieutenant **Ulysses S. Grant**, fresh from West Point, was assigned to St. Louis' Jefferson Barracks. Grant was a frequent visitor to the home of his academy roommate Frederick Dent who lived on his family's St. Louis County farm, **White Haven**. There he met and fell in love with Dent's sister Julia. Five years later, upon "Sam" Grant's return from the Mexican-American War, the couple married on August 22 at the Dent's St. Louis city home at Fourth and Cerre Streets. The young couple lived at White Haven until Grant's military assignments separated him from his wife and young family. Grant dreaded the separation from Julia and the children so much that he resigned his commission and returned to them in St. Louis. Grant built a log cabin home on a 100-acre tract on the White Haven farm given to him and his wife by his father-in-law. He and his family lived there for three months until his mother-in-law Ellen Dent's death after which the Grants moved back to the main family house. Located 15-minutes from downtown St. Louis and open free-of-charge, White Haven is operated as the **Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site**. Visitors can tour the Victorian-style house and grounds and learn more about the Dent and Grant families' lives at the interpretive center operated by the National Parks Service.
- Hardscrabble, the log cabin home hand-built by U.S. Grant, can be seen from April through October at Grant's Farm, a 281-acre animal preserve operated by St. Louis' Anheuser-Busch, Inc. The free attraction also features a Clydesdale horse breeding farm, a petting zoo and animal conservation and skill shows. Incidentally, Grant's cabin was moved from its original setting near what is now St. Paul's Churchyard Cemetery to be placed on view as a major attraction at St. Louis' fabled 1904 World's Fair.
- **U.S. Grant** sold cordwood harvested from his Hardscrabble farm at **St. Louis' Soulard Farmer's Market**. Produce, fresh meats, spices and flowers are available to modern day shoppers Wednesday through Saturday. In operation since 1779, Soulard is the nation's oldest farmers' market and a cornerstone of **Soulard**, St. Louis' oldest neighborhood. Only minutes south of downtown St. Louis, Soulard is known for its brick row houses, blues music clubs, corner taverns and as home to the world headquarters of Anheuser-Busch, Inc., the world's largest brewer. Soulard celebrates its French heritage each year by hosting one of the nation's biggest Mardi Gras celebrations and spirited events to commemorate Bastille Day.
- Just north of St. Louis, neighboring **Alton, Illinois** was one of the places where future president **Abraham Lincoln** and Stephen Douglas engaged in a series of "Great Debates." The primary topic: slavery. Statuary and an historical marker note the site of this senatorial debate in Alton's Lincoln Douglas Square. Off historic Route 66, just two hours from St. Louis in **Springfield, Illinois**, visitors can tour the historic home of America's 16th president, see the Old State Capitol where Lincoln also debated Stephen Douglas and visit Lincoln's tomb at Oak Ridge Cemetery. Just north of Springfield is **New Salem**, a log cabin village where young Lincoln lived before his political career began, now a living history museum. In 1861, **U.S. Grant** legally freed his only slave at St. Louis' **Old Courthouse**, the building that was the scene of **Dred and Harriet Scott's** historic freedom trial. The famous case, which started in 1847 at the Old Courthouse, focused national attention on the slavery issue. Scott won his case in St. Louis only to have the Supreme Court overturn the lower court's ruling, denying Scott and his wife Harriet their freedom on the grounds that they were not U.S. citizens and, therefore, not entitled to sue. Visitors can tour the historic courtroom and St. Louis history galleries and participate in National Park

Service ranger-led reenactments of the famed Dred Scott trial.

- Thanks to **President Theodore Roosevelt**, the "lights were shining" in St. Louis on April 30, 1904. That day, through the magic of turn-of-the-19th century public relations, from the East Room of the White House, T.R. "turned the key" which officially opened the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. Roosevelt visited the St. Louis fair on November 26, 1904 to be greeted by more than 200,000 cheering fairgoers. An avid outdoorsman, Roosevelt was most pleased that the first **Olympic Games** ever staged in the United States were taking place in St. Louis in conjunction with the fair. The games were held at **Washington University** stadium which is now known as Francis Field in honor of David R. Francis, Washington University alumnus and trustee, and St. Louis civic leader who was the president and director of the famous fair. Visitors can see memorabilia from the "Meet Me in St. Louis" fair at the Missouri History Museum which is located in St. Louis' Forest Park, the original site of the fairgrounds. The ever-intrepid **T.R.** became the first president to ride in an airplane when he boarded a plane at St. Louis' Kinloch Airfield in 1911. St. Louis's proud aviation history also is on display at the Missouri History Museum including the actual flight suit worn by Charles Lindbergh on his monumental trans-Atlantic trip in the "Spirit of St. Louis." A replica of the famous aircraft (the original is housed in the National Air & Space Museum in Washington DC) is suspended in the museum's foyer.

- **President Franklin D. Roosevelt** was the recipient of a true St. Louis-style gift in 1934. The first case of post-prohibition Budweiser was delivered to FDR at the White House via the Budweiser eight-horse hitch. The now famous draft horses and signature red wagon were presented to the St. Louis-based brewery's owner by his son August A. Busch Jr. Since that day, the Clydesdales have become synonymous with Anheuser-Busch and St. Louis, appearing in commercials and at major events and parades throughout the country. Throughout the year, visitors can see the elegant Clydesdale stables, the beechwood aging cellars, historic Brew House and hospitality center by taking a **complimentary tour** of the famous brewery's St. Louis headquarters. FDR arrived in St. Louis in 1935 to dedicate the site for a memorial to St. Louisans who lost their lives in World War I. Now known as Soldiers Memorial, **the free downtown memorial museum** honors U.S. veterans and war dead from both World Wars, Korea and Vietnam.

- "This is one for the books." So said Missouri's-own **President Harry S. Truman** when presented with the infamous newspaper bearing the headline, "Dewey Defeats Truman." The celebrated photograph of a victorious Truman raising the erroneous *Chicago Daily Tribune* was taken on the back of a train car at **St. Louis Union Station** on November 3, 1948. Once the world's busiest passenger train station, St. Louis Union Station has found new life as a festival marketplace of shops, restaurants, nightclubs, a man-made lake complete with paddleboats, a 10-screen movie theatre and the luxurious Hyatt Regency St. Louis hotel. The image of **Harry Truman** casts a glow from a neon sculpture along a building front in downtown St. Louis on Olive Street between 9th and 10th streets.

- The Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, better known as the **Gateway Arch**, was dedicated on May 25, 1968 by **Vice President Hubert Humphrey**. The only president to take the tram ride to the top of 630-foot tall monument was **Dwight D. Eisenhower**.

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